

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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R 181242Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5387

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBSSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

REF: LISBON A-248 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: NOV 13 LOCK-IN OF CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY AND NOV 25  
COUP ATTEMPT HAVE BROUGHT PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION OF  
CONSTITUTION OF VIRTUAL STANDSTILL. HOWEVER, INCREASED  
POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF ASSEMBLY AND ASSERTIVENESS OF ITS  
MEMBERS AS RESULT OF THESE EVENTS OUTWEIGH ANY DELAYS.  
END SUMMARY.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL PROGRESS STALLED: CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY (CA)  
CURRENTLY STANDS NO CLOSER TO COMPLETING CONSTITUTION THAN IT  
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DID NOV 12, WHEN IT APPROVED FINAL ARTICLE OF TITLE IV (ECONOMIC

AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE). ON NOV 13, CA DELEGATES WERE TRAPPED FOR OVER 19 HOURS IN SAO BENTO PALACE--WHERE ASSEMBLY MEETS --BY STRIKING COMMUNIST-LED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS. RECONVENING NOV 18, CA HAD SCHEDULED DEBATE ON TITLE V (ORGANIZATION OF POLITICAL POWER) TO BEGIN NOV 25. COUP ATTEMPT OF THAT DATE, HOWEVER, PROMPTED CA TO SUSPEND ACTIVITIES UNTIL DEC 2. ON DEC 10, ASSEMBLY VOTED TO SUSPEND DISCUSSION OF DRAFT OF TITLE V UNTIL AFTER REVISION OF ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM)- PARTIES CONSTITUTIONAL PACT, UPON PROVISIONS OF WHICH MUCH OF DRAFT'S SUBSTANCE DEPENDED. ALTHOUGH CA FORMALLY BEGAN DEBATE ON COURT SYSTEM DEC 12, MOST DEPUTIES ARE NOT YET PREPARED TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT AND ASSEMBLY HAS, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, BEEN MARKING TIME UNTIL ITS DEC 19 ADJOURNMENT FOR THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

2. POLITICAL IMPACT OF INTERRUPTIONS: ANY SETBACKS WHICH THE EVENTS OF THE LAST MONTH HAVE CAUSED IN THE PREPARATION OF THE CONSTITUTION ARE OUTWEIGHED BY THE IMPACT THEY, ESPECIALLY NOVE 25 COUP, HAVE HAD ON THE CA'S ROLE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. PRIOR TO ITS NOV 13 LOOK-IN, UMPORTANCE OF CA AS A FORUM FOR POLITICAL DEBATE HAD BEEN GROWING STEADILY AND DEPUTIES HAD GROWN INCREASINGLY ASSERTIVE IN THEIR CONTENTION THAT ASSEMBLY WAS--BY VIRTUE OF ITS POPULAR ELECTION--THE SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE. NOV 7 SUGGESTION BY SOCIALIST DEPUTY AND THEORETICIAN MARIO SOTTOMAYOR CARDIA THAT ARMED FORCES-PARTIES CONSTITUTIONAL PACT SHOULD BE REVISED IN LIGHT OF CHANGES IN POLITICAL CLIMATE SINCE ITS SIGNING REFLECTED THIS NEW FOUND SENSE OF CONFIDENCE AMONG DEPUTIES. CA REACTION TO LOCK-IN WAS ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF SAME PHENOMENON; ASSEMBLY FORMALLY DEMANDED THAT PRESIDENT GUARANTEE SECURITY NECESSARY FOR CA TO CARRY ON ITS WORK AND THREATENED TO QUIT LISBON AND RECONVENE IN MORE SECURE LOCATION IF HE COULD NOT.

3. THE COUP: BY ELIMINATING OR WEAKENING ITS PRIMARY ANTAGONISTS: THE FAR LEFT, THE PCP, THE RADICAL MILITARY, AND THE COMMUNIST-LINING PRESS, THE FAILURE OF THE NOV 25 COUP REMOVED ANY RESTRAINTS THE CA DEPUTIES MAY HAVE FELT ABOUT PRESSING THEIR CLAIM FOR A MORE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS. BEGINNING DEC 4, SOCIALIST PARTY, POPULAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC CENTER PARTY DEPUTIES LAUNCHED FRONTAL ATTACKS AGAINST THE AF-PARTIES PACT, WHICH, THEIR COMMENTS MADE CLEAR, THEY REGARDED AS PRIMARY OBSTACLE TO ESTABLISHMENT OF PLURALISTIC, DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL SYSTEM IN PORTUGAL

ASSEMBLY VICE PRESIDENT VASCO DA GAMA FERNANDEZ BEST SUMMED UP MOOD OF CA WITH HIS DECLARATION:

"GENTLEMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES, ENOUGH\* WE ARE PERFECTLY

CAPABLE OF GOVERNING THIS COUNTRY."

4. COMMENT: CA'S NEWLY ACQUIRED VISIBILITY, AGRESSSIVENESS,  
AND SELF-CONFIDENCE WILL MAKE IT A VALUABLE FORUM FOR MAJOR  
POLITICAL PARTIES' AND "OPERATIONAL" MILITARY'S CAMPAIGN TO  
GET ARMED FORCES BACK INTO THE BARRACKS.  
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